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Letter dated 10 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter addressed to you from Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdulmejid **Hussein**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 10 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you concerning developments in Somalia that are now becoming a source of concern for us in Ethiopia. I am writing to you at this time because I thought that all concerned, most particularly the United Nations, should be alerted to certain potential dangers in Somalia which should be contained before they get out of hand. I am referring here, Mr. President, among other things, to the statement by the BBC on 8 January 2001, which is attributed to Mr. Ali Khalif Galayr, Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government of Somalia. The Prime Minister is credited with having criticized Ethiopia for interfering in the affairs of Somalia.

This is both saddening and a source of concern for Ethiopia. It is saddening because the people within the Transitional National Government should be the first to know how much Ethiopia has done to help the people of Somalia achieve national reconciliation and establish a broad-based Government.

We are not, however, very much surprised over this latest development. It has been clear for us for some time that what the Transitional National Government considers a priority is not bringing about national reconciliation in Somalia through dialogue. What the Transitional Government has appeared to consider a priority is rather securing the submission of those who were not part of the Arta process through whatever means available, including force and through cultivating international legitimacy and recognition. The officials of the Transitional National Government have, as a consequence, appeared very little interested in the creation of domestic legitimacy and consensus. I am not sure whether all of us have done enough to prevail upon the Transitional National Government to exercise wisdom and prudence in this regard.

The entire diplomatic activity of the Transitional National Government has therefore been geared towards soliciting money and support for vanquishing those who have not yet joined the Arta process, but who happen to have established peace and security in their respective regions. We do not believe that the 10-year-old conflict in Somalia can be solved through reliance solely on support from outside.

This approach being used by the Transitional National Government to subdue those who have not accepted its authority within the country is now being used against the neighbours of Somalia that have raised some concerns with regard to the policy pursued by the Transitional National Government. The statement by the Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government from Djibouti is with little doubt designed to make Ethiopia a scapegoat for the difficulties faced by his Government inside the country. Accordingly, it appears that the Transitional National Government is hoping that by blaming Ethiopia for the weaknesses within the Transitional National Government, that money would flow into its coffers and that it would also win greater support from the international community. That the Transitional National Government might also be trying to drive a wedge between Ethiopia and some sections of the international community should not be ruled out. This is very dangerous and bears all the hallmarks of a sinister motive. This should not be acceptable to anyone, but even less so to the United Nations.

In fact, in the light of the role that the United Nations had in shepherding the Arta process, it has a much greater responsibility than most for contributing towards the cultivation of common sense and prudence in connection with the peace process in Somalia.

We in Ethiopia believe that there is still great hope for genuine national reconciliation in Somalia and for the establishment of a broad-based government in that country. We feel that all should contribute our level best towards maintaining the momentum created by the Arta Conference. Both the Transitional National Government and those who were not part of the Arta process have great responsibility in this regard. This is also what was agreed upon at the summit of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) which was convened in Khartoum recently. It is only through dialogue that national reconciliation can be achieved in Somalia. This is what should be reiterated to the Transitional National Government and its representatives. The officials of the Transitional National Government will not advance the interest of Somalia by attacking those who refuse to encourage them to follow a path which will be unlikely to lead either to national reconciliation in Somalia or to peace in that country, or in the subregion in general. Moreover, countries of the subregion such as Ethiopia have legitimate right to respond to real, and not just perceived, threats to their national security. The Transitional National Government cannot be allowed to entertain the illusion that those who have legitimate national security concerns can be forced and bulldozed into silence by the threats of negative international public opinion. This illusion is potentially dangerous and could lead the Transitional National Government to be more and more reckless.

It is my hope that this will not happen and that the officials of the Transitional National Government may be persuaded to be more realistic than they have been lately. They should be told to resist the temptation of creating artificial enemies for purely political purposes with the view to making up for their internal weaknesses. What is needed on their part is to address those weaknesses in a realistic manner. What is also needed is to act in accordance with what is in the interest of Somalia, and the rest of the countries of the subregion.

There is real hope for peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. This is an opportunity that the Transitional National Government, together with those who are not now on speaking terms with it, should seize to bring to an end the agony of the people of Somalia. But this can be done only when the Transitional National Government ceases trying to create artificial enemies — a necessity felt by the Transitional National Government because of its outside orientation in the search for support of all sorts, including support for political legitimacy. The Transitional National Government should return its orientation back to Somalia and focus on what needs to be done domestically. This is also in the interest of our subregion. It is my hope that we can count on your support and the support of the Security Council to this end.

(*Signed*) Seyoum **Mesfin**
Minister for Foreign Affairs